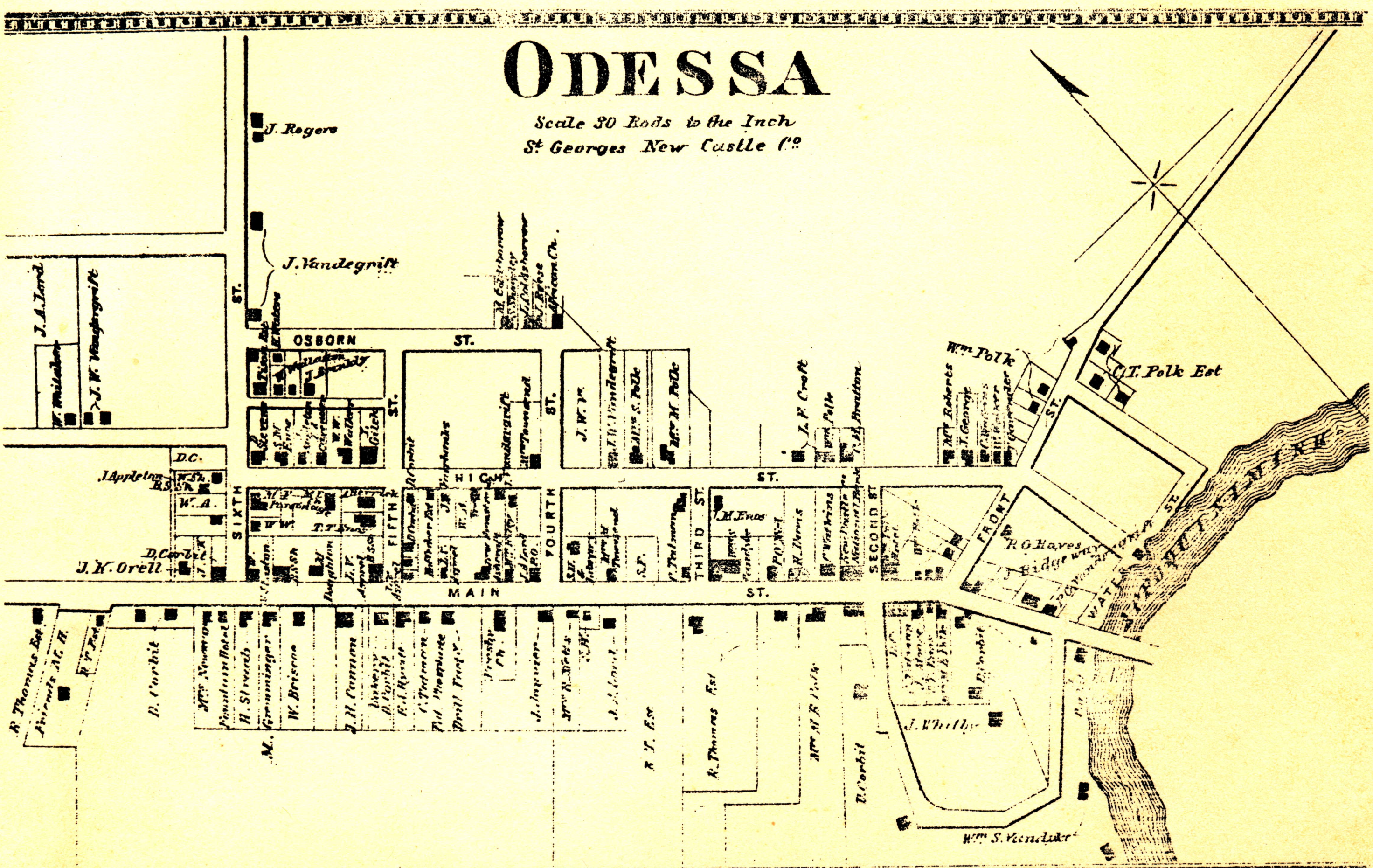
ODESSA YESTERDAY


ODESSA
Scale 30 Rods to the Inch
St Georges New Castle Co.
OSBORN ST.
HIGH ST.
MAIN ST.
SIXTH ST.
FIFTH ST.
FOURTH ST.
THIRD ST.
SECOND ST.
FRONT ST.
WATER ST.
J. Rogers
J. Vandegrift
J. A. Lord
J. W. Vandegrift
J. K. Orell
J. Appleton
D. Corbit
Wm. Polk
C. T. Polk Est
J. F. Croft
R. G. Hayes
J. Ridgeway
J. Whitby
Wm. S. Vandyke
R. Thomas Est
Friends M. H.
B. Corbit
H. Stevens
W. Briscoe
J. H. Cannon
M. E. Parsonage
African Ch.

Odessa Business Directory.

Hotels.

Wm. T. Chance...Proprietor of Odessa House.
E. Newman...Proprietor of Fountain Inn.

Merchants.

C. Watkins...Dealer in General Merchandise.
C. M. Bratton... " " "
W. W. Walker... " " "
F. B. Stevens... " " "
H. P. Baker...Dealer in Drugs, Medicines, Chemicals, Paints, Oils, Dye Stuffs and Fancy Articles.

Physicians.

W. M. Hamilton.
Wm. Ashcraft.

Residents.

J. Whitby.
D. Corbit.
C. C. Foster.
R. C. Hayes.
C. E. A. Mailly.
Mrs. S. E. Polk.
J. Appleton.

Farmers.

Wm. Polk...Farmer.
J. C. Corbit...Farmer.
D. Stevens...Farmer and Coal Dealer.
Jos. W. Vandegrift...Farmer.
Chas. Bratton...Farmer.

Miscellaneous.

Chas. Tatman...President New Castle Co. N
J. L. Gibson...Cashier " "
Geo. A. Phoebus...Pastor M. E. Church.
L. V. Aspril...Blacksmith and Wheelwright.
F. A. Hyatt...Nurseryman.
S. M. Enos...Plasterer.
J. M. Enos...Bricklayer.
M. D. Hickman...Collector.

Beers, Atlas of Delaware 1868

ODESSA YESTERDAY

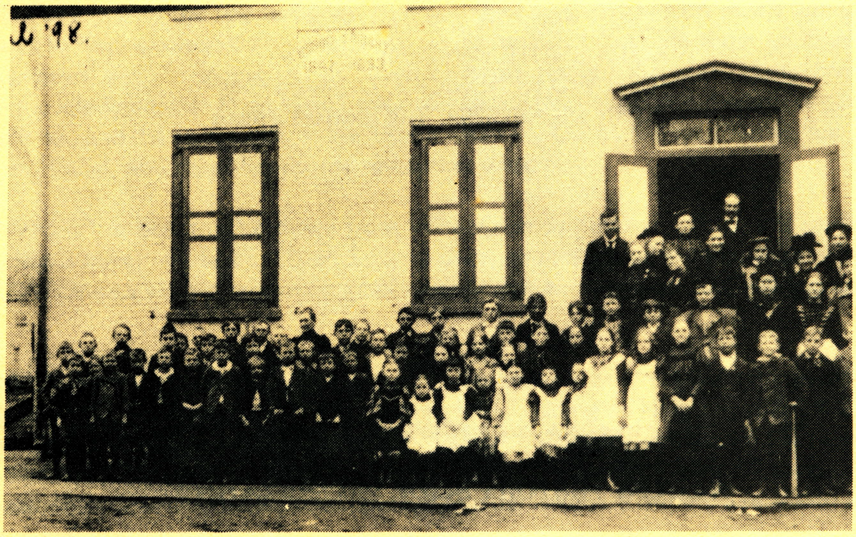
by

The Committee for the Slide Presentation

ODESSA: YESTERDAY & TODAY

Sponsored by

The Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library



The Prize-winning Photo

An 1898 view of the Academy with students and teachers posing out front. This two-story, imposing brick building was constructed in 1844 at the corner of Third and Main Streets after the burning of the public school. Today the building houses the offices of the Appoquinimink School District.[1]

This program is partially funded by the Delaware Humanities Forum, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

THE YESTERDAY & TODAY COMMITTEE

SUE JAMISON, Project Dir.
HORACE HOTCHKISS, Consultant
HAROLD WATTS, JR., Consultant
JACK SPARKS, Middletown
MARY ELLA BOYLE, Middletown
MARY HOMAN, Townsend
MIRIAM DOUGLAS, Townsend
CLARA REYNOLDS, Townsend
PETE RATLEDGE, Townsend
DEAN NELSON, St. Georges
GLADYS LESTER, St. Georges
JEANNE PASSMORE, St. Georges
GEORGE CALEY, Smyrna
GAIL GIBBONS, Smyrna
ROBERT BECK, Port Penn
LINDA BECK, Port Penn
RUTH SMITH, Port Penn
RICHARD HENDRICKS, Delaware City
JOHN DICKINSON, The Etcetera Towns

ODESSA: YESTERDAY & TODAY

A LOCAL HISTORY SLIDE PRESENTATION

Narrated by

HORACE HOTCHKISS & SUE JAMISON

Monday & Tuesday, February 16th & 17th

at

7:30 p.m.

Sponsoring Organization: The Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
Contributing Organizations: Winterthur Properties, Odessa; The Friends of the Corbit-Calloway Library; The Appoquinimink School District; Odessa Women's Club; Townsend Women's Club; Central Grange, St. Georges; Duck Creek Historical Society, Smyrna Friends of the Library, Port Penn Museum; Port Penn Civic Association, Delaware City Historical Society.

ODESSA, DELAWARE

Odessa has had a long history going back to the Dutch and the Swedes in the 17th century but, aside from a few old family names, no traces of these settlers remain. By the early 18th century, there seems to have been a straggle of buildings along the south side of Main Street. The Starr-Lore House, The John Ennis House, and the Old Moore House (now owned by Jesse Loven) are partially of plank and log construction. By the 1770's, the building of the Wilson and Corbit Houses indicated that real commercial importance had come to the town.

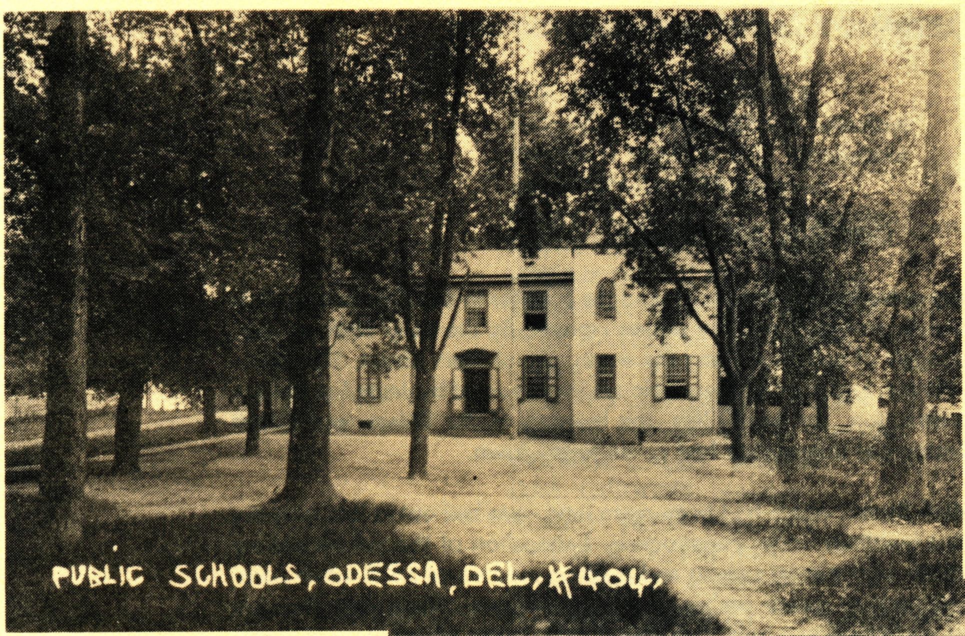
In 1822 the north side of Main Street, which had been open land, was laid out in lots, and the Brick Hotel was one of the first buildings under construction. Exhaustion of the soil on nearby farms seems to have slowed down commercial activity and building until about 1835 when commercial fertilizers and the laying out of peach orchards revived the area. Many fine wooden houses in the late Federal style on Main Street and High Street attest to the return of good times. Real wealth came to the community in the 1850's when the Old Methodist Church, the Bank, the Cyrus Polk House, and other handsome residences were built.

"The Yellows" or blight came down from Wilmington in 1890 and from this onslaught the peach orchards never recovered. When Rodney Sharp taught school in Odessa for awhile in the early 1900's, Odessa was no longer a port of much importance and no new building was underway.

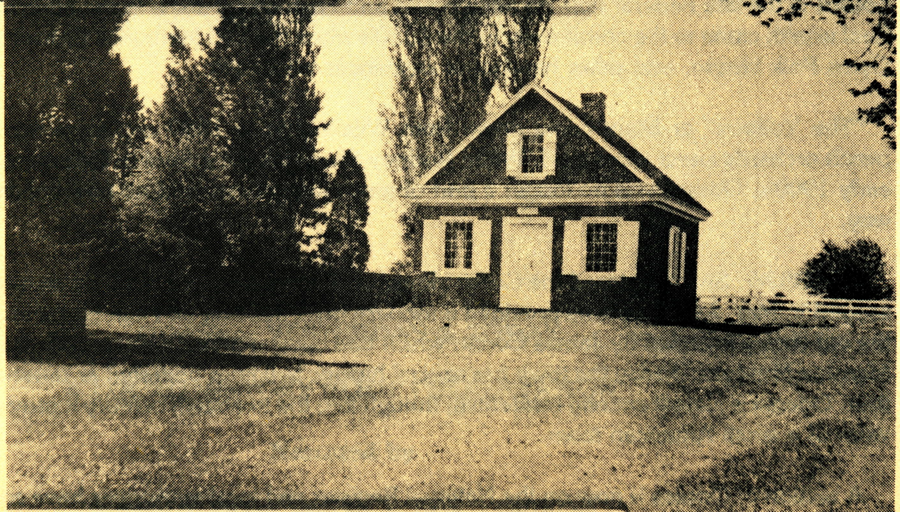
In 1938 Mr. Sharp restored the Corbit House and purchased and restored several old buildings around it. Mrs. J.C. Calloway provided a modern brick building on High Street in 1968 to house the old library founded by James Corbit, which had been sharing quarters with the David Wilson Mansion Museum. Today the town has several historic buildings operated as museums by Winterthur. Odessa is almost entirely residential, though into the twentieth century it provided all the services of a small American town.

A section of Odessa is now on the National Register and local authorities have zoned the whole town Historic. Since this booklet is concerned with Odessa's past, there has not been space here to illustrate the many old homes which have recently been restored or the many attractive residences in Odessa Heights.

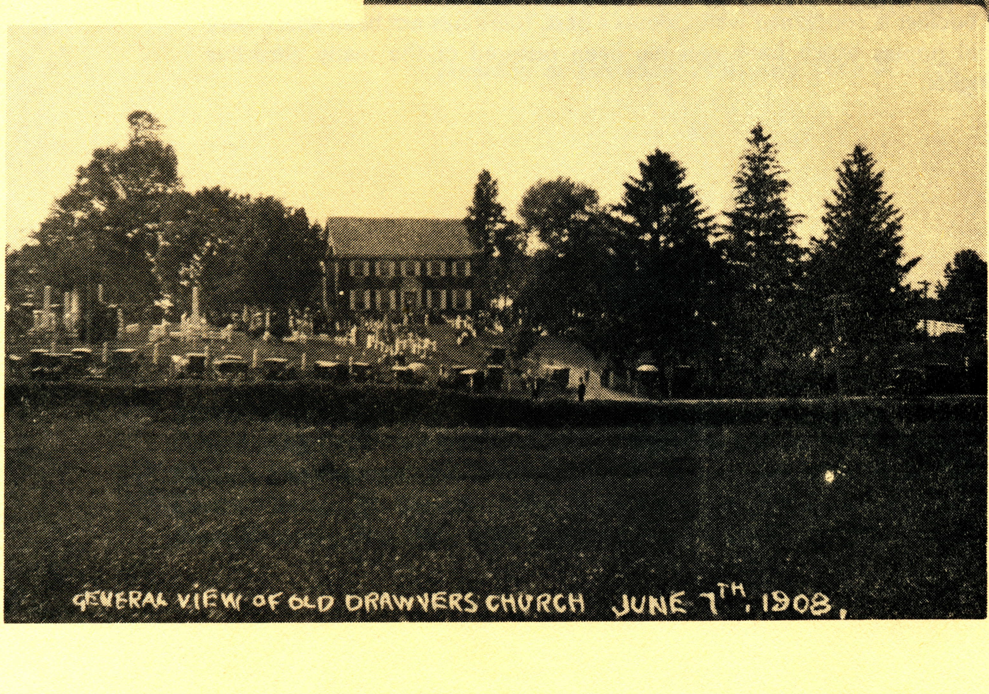
SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES



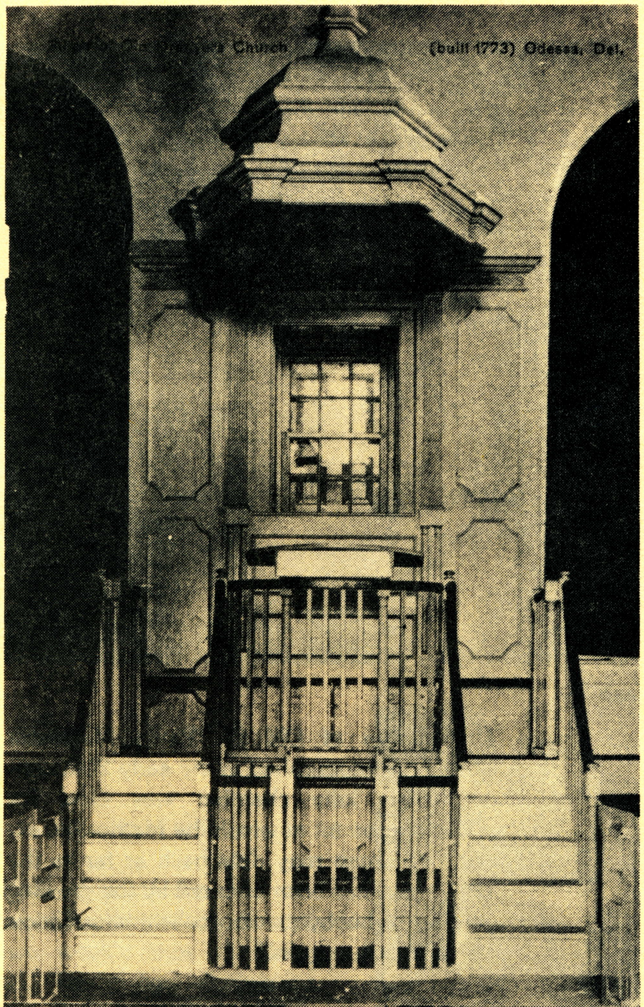
A c1908 view of the Academy Building & grounds. The west wing, added in 1893, housed the Corbit Library after fire damaged the original building earlier that year. The library remained here until its move to the Wilson House in 1924.[2]



The Friends Meeting House on the road to Middletown was built c1781 by David Wilson as a compliment to his wife, Mary Corbit, a birthright Quaker. Though the smallest religious group in town, the Quakers were extremely influential. This Meeting House, abandoned in the early 1900's, now holds monthly meetings.[3]

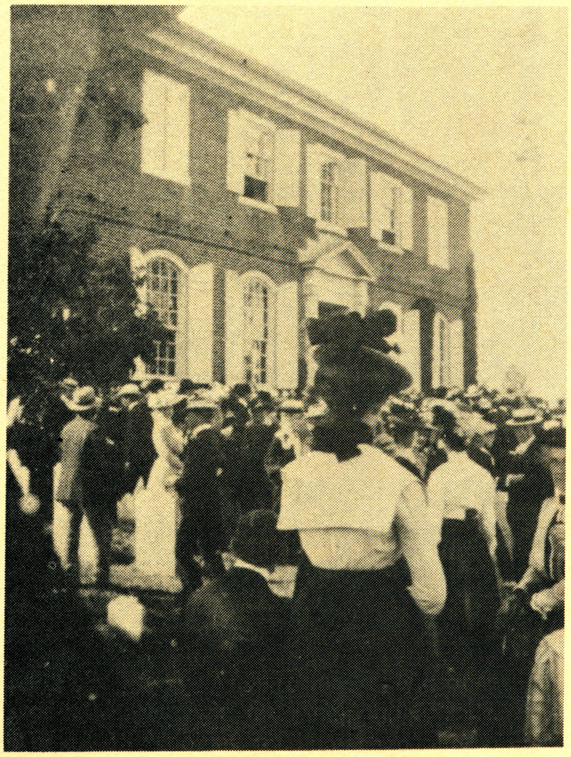


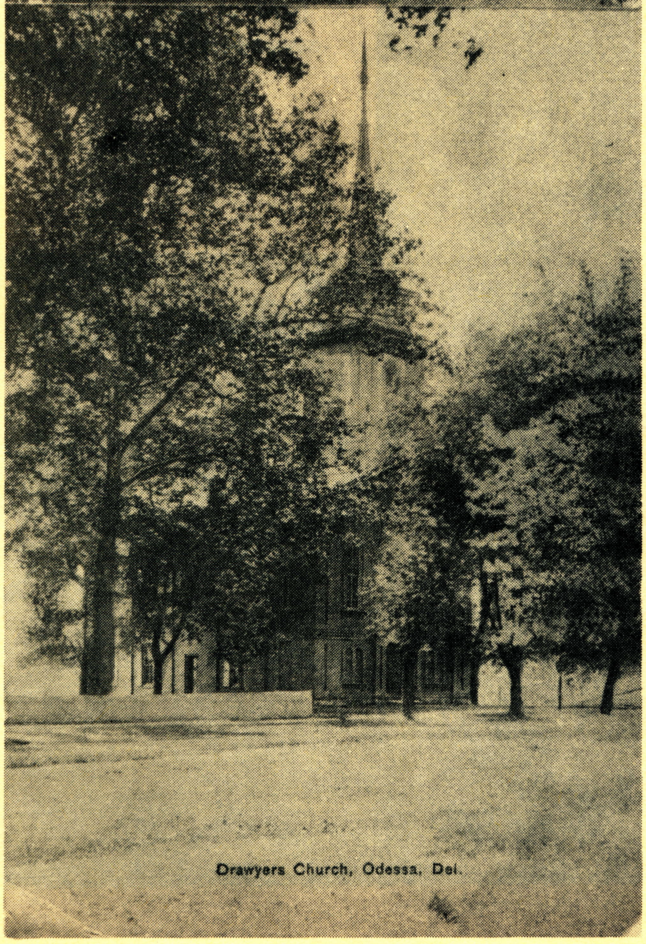
A view taken on Old Drawyers Day, about 1908. Descendents of the original congregation came once a year to hear a commemorative sermon, to enjoy a picnic lunch, to revive old acquaintance and to wander about, rediscovering the graves of their ancestors.[4]



The pulpit of Old Drawyers Church has a handsome canopy with carved wood decoration in the Chippendale style. Under this sounding board, Dr. Thomas Read preached long sermons, two a day on Sundays.[5]

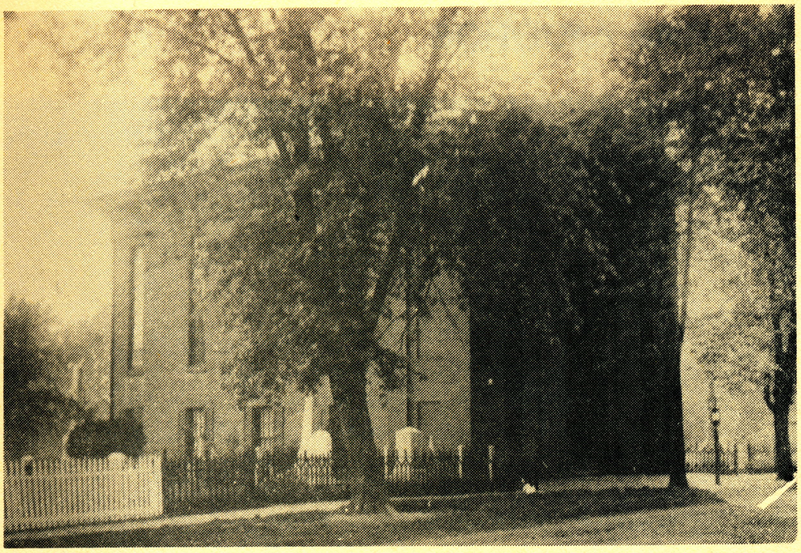
Old Drawyers Church above Odessa was attended by the skilled craftsmen, John Janvier and Duncan Beard. In the Victorian period the local Presbyterians closed up the church and built another on Main St., Odessa. Interest in the old building was revived in the 1890's when the *FRIENDS OF OLD DRAWYERS* was organized. In this c1900 view, an Old Drawyers Day service & picnic are under way.[6]



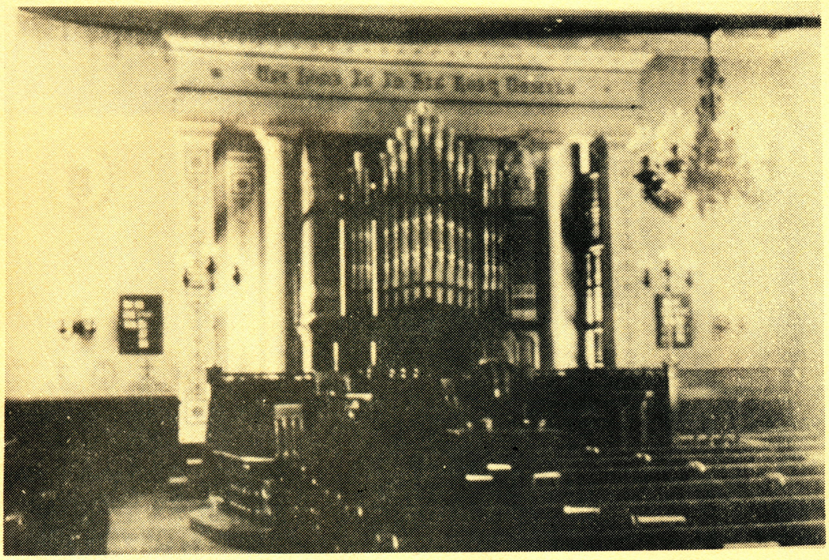


Drawyers Church, Odessa, Del.

New Drawyers Church was built on the site of the present St. Paul's Methodist Church in the 1870's. It was torn down in relatively recent years, thus depriving the surrounding countryside of a familiar landmark, the high church steeple and spire.[7]

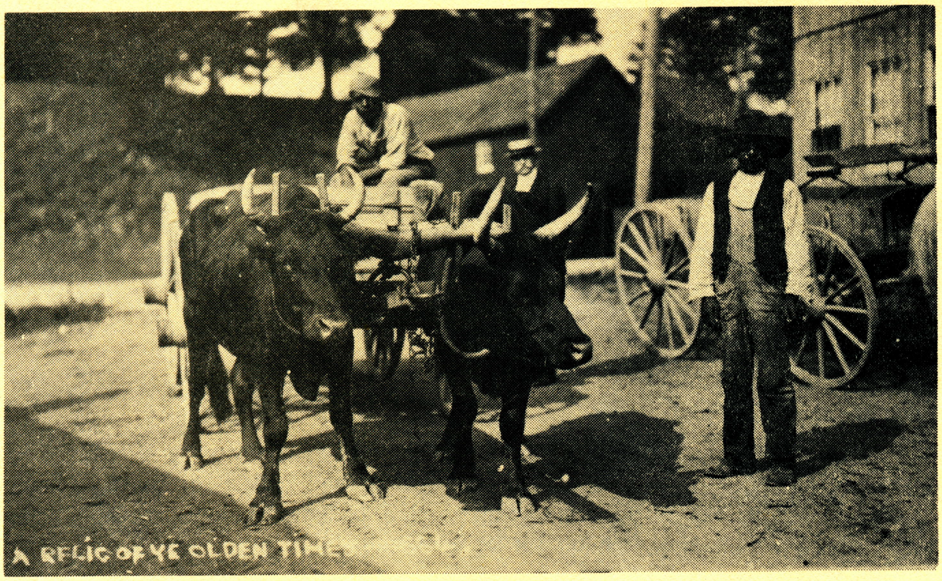


Old St. Paul's Methodist Church, High Street. Methodism grew in Delaware by leaps and bounds in the early 19th century, as is shown by this imposing brick church built in 1852. The architect was Samuel Sloan of Philadelphia. It is being restored by the Women's Club of Odessa.[8]

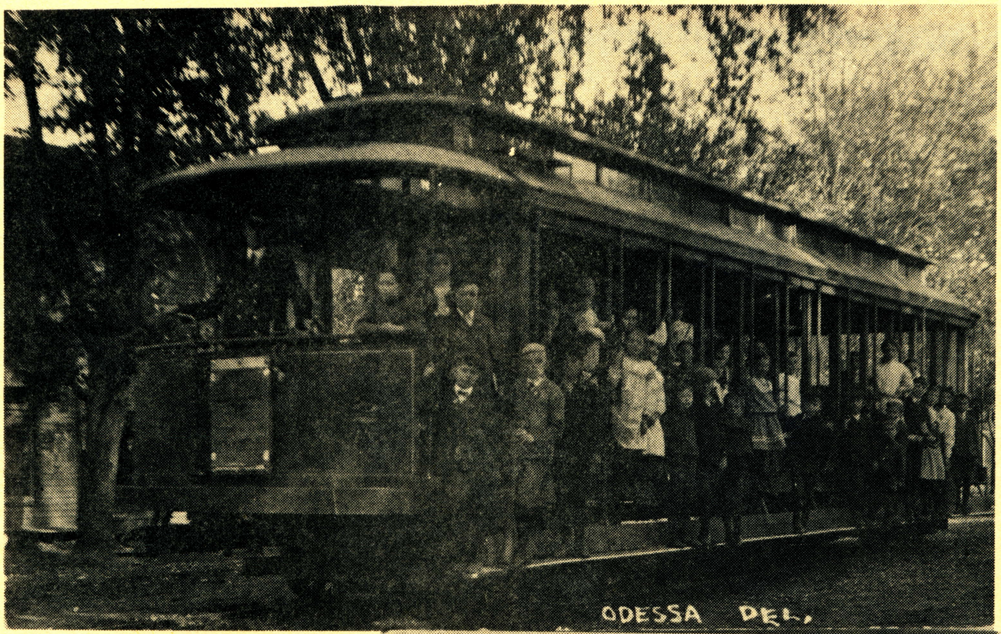


The interior of Old St. Paul's Methodist Church, photographed in the early 20th century. This lofty chamber was ideal for preaching, an art at which the Methodists excel. The organ may date back as far as the 1880's and has been admired by the growing number of hobbyists who collect information about church organs.[9]

TRANSPORTATION

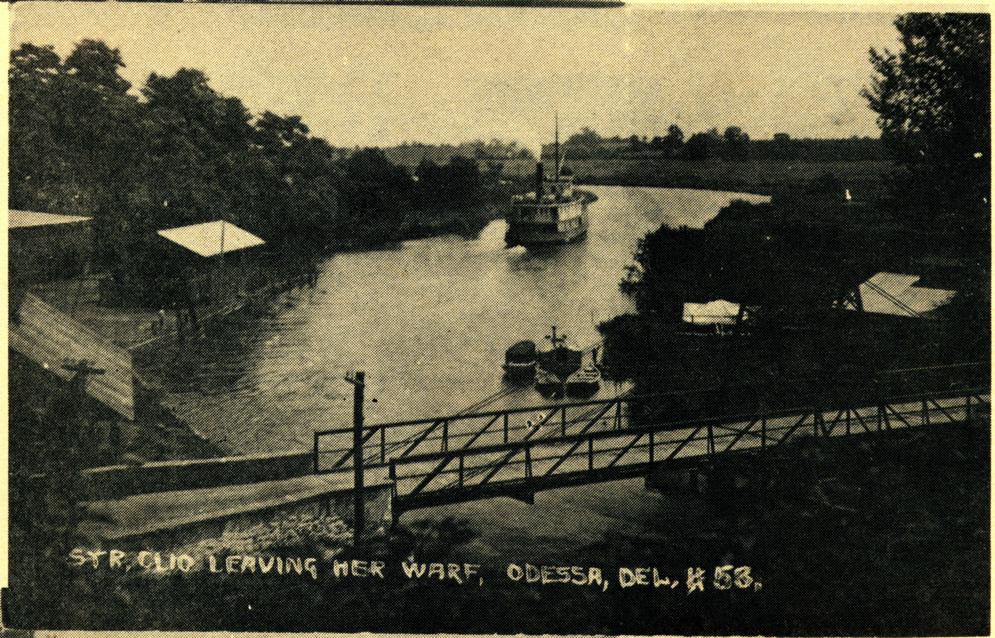

A RELIC OF YE OLDEN TIME

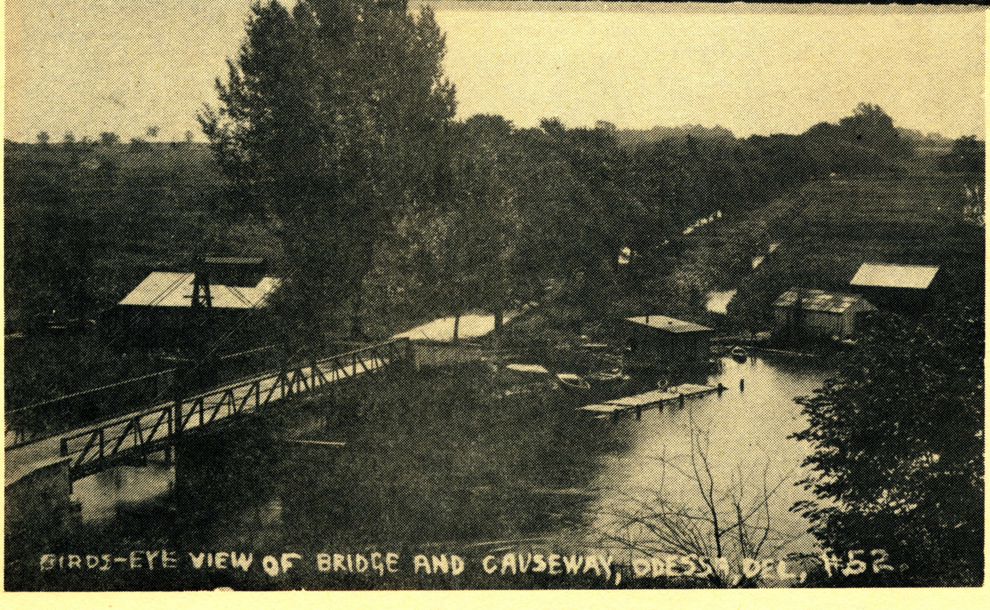
Turn-of-the-century transportation still included the occasional ox cart. This cart awaits loading at the Watkins Cannery and boat landing.[10]



A c1908 view of a trolley car on the Odessa-Middletown Railway, which for a few years provided fifteen scheduled trips daily between the two towns.[11]

A c1908 view of the 150 ton steamer Clio, beginning one of her two weekly trips to Philadelphia. Trade had diminished after reaching its peak in 1850, but trade that year still totaled over $10,000.[12]


STR. CLIO LEAVING HER WARF, ODESSA, DEL. #53.


BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF BRIDGE AND CAUSEWAY, ODESSA DEL. #52.

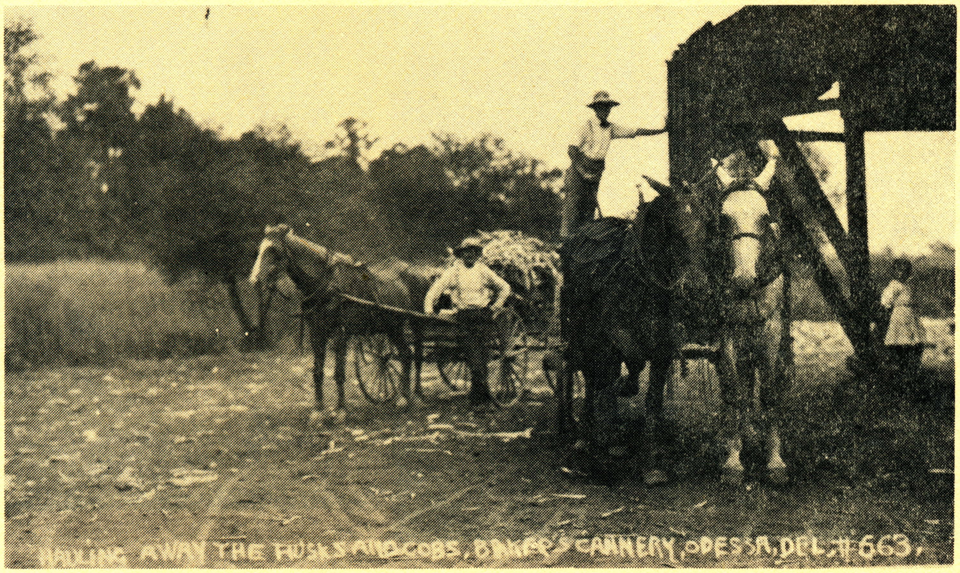
A c1908 birdseye view of the 19th century drawbridge built to accommodate this busy shipping port. Note the trees on the causeway and Les and Fletch Morgan's fishing shacks which disappeared about 1940.[13]

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The brick hotel was built in 1823 by William Polk. In the 1950's H. Rodney Sharp purchased it and restored the exterior, removing, however, the old front porch. Now under Winterthur, it will open in May, 1981 as the Brick Hotel Gallery of American Art.[14]

This c1908 view shows Watkins Packing Co. on the same site as today's cannery building. By that date, the Watkins Co. had packed corn and tomatoes for 20 years, averaging 30,000 cases of corn and 70,000 cases of tomatoes per season.[15]

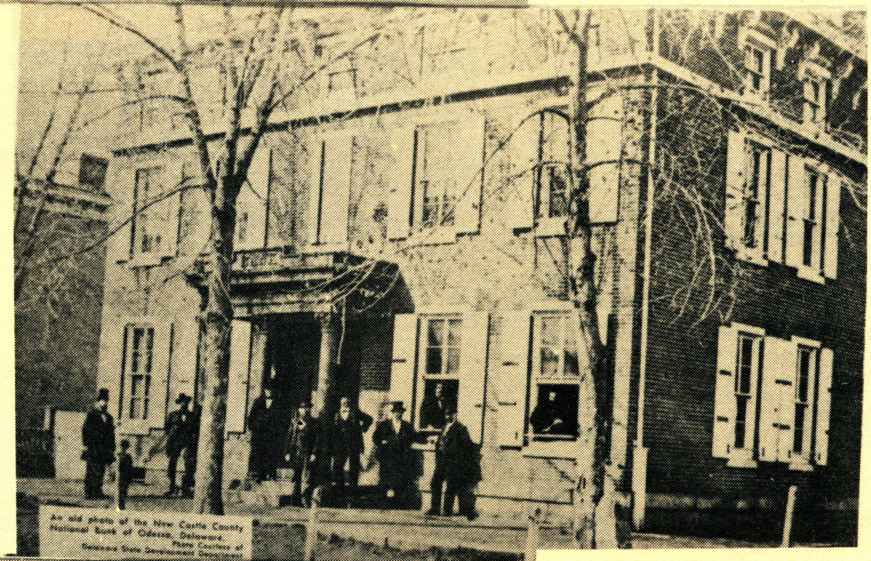
WATKINS' CANNERY ODESSA, DEL. # [illegible]


HAULING AWAY THE HUSKS AND COBS, BAKER'S CANNERY, ODESSA, DEL. #663.

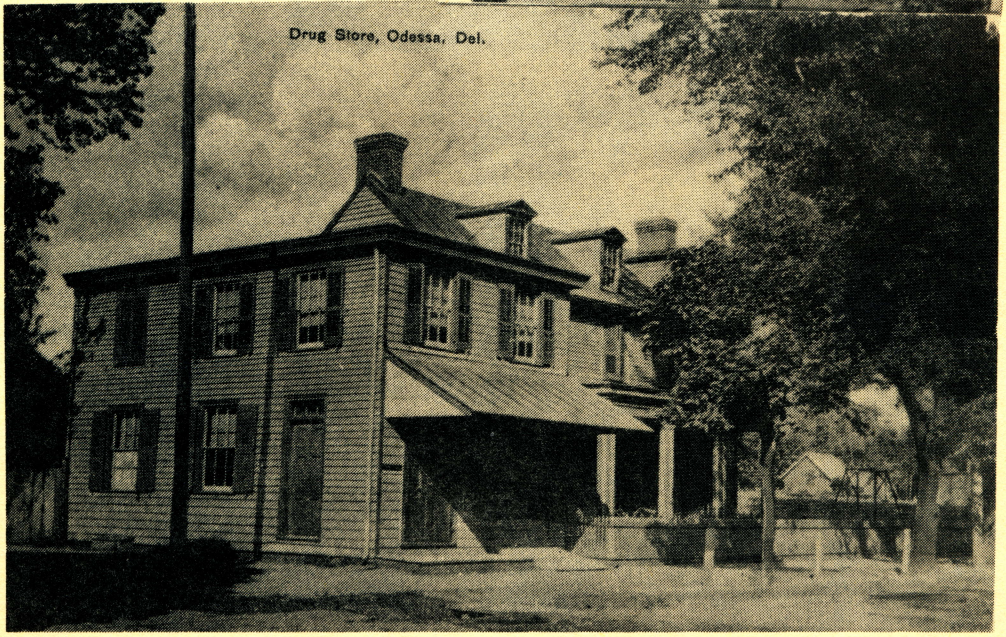
This c1908 view shows seasonal workers at Baker's Cannery, a short distance up the creek from Watkins' on land owned today by Leslie Calloway. Baker's put up 30,000 cases of whole kernal corn per season, valued at $45,000.[16]

Appoquinimink Creek, Odessa, Del.

A c1908 view of the Appoquinimink Creek, looking south toward the creamery, which in the 1890's had produced, on the average, 300 lbs. of butter per day. Its ad in the **Odessa Herald** announced: "No creamery in the country is more noted for its cleanliness and good prices."[17]

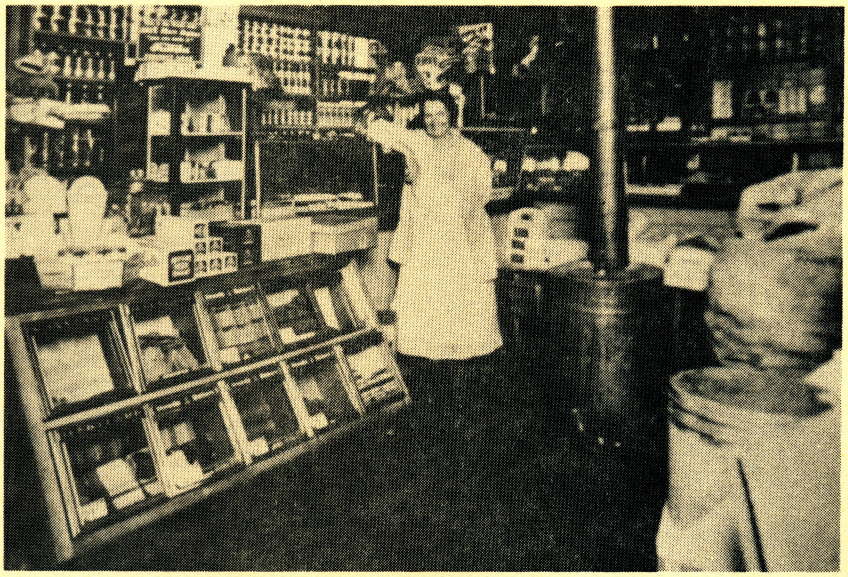

An old photo of the New Castle County National Bank of Odessa, Delaware. Photo Courtesy of Delaware State Development Department

A c1865 view of the new New Castle County National Bank building at 2nd and Main Sts. The bank, chartered in 1853 as a state bank, opened for business in Charles Tatman's office at 3rd & Main Sts. Later, but before the construction of this building, the bank had rented space from Columbus Watkins in the building later known as the Davis store.[18]

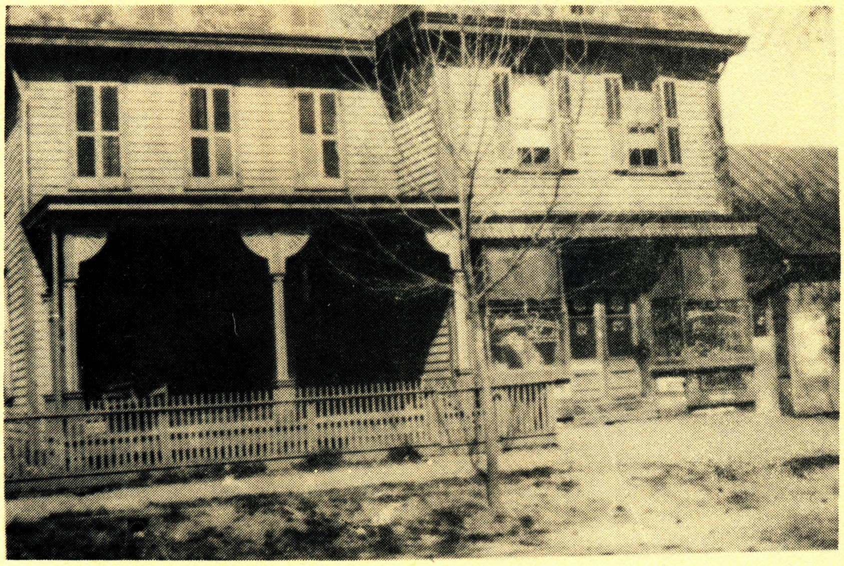

Drug Store, Odessa, Del.

This c1908 photo shows Baker's Drug Store, constructed about 1840 at the corner of 3rd & Main. The building also contained the medical offices of Dr. Joseph Carrow, noted for his benevolent treatment of Odessa's poor. The corner wing was removed about 1940. The building was restored by its owners, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Jarrell.[19]

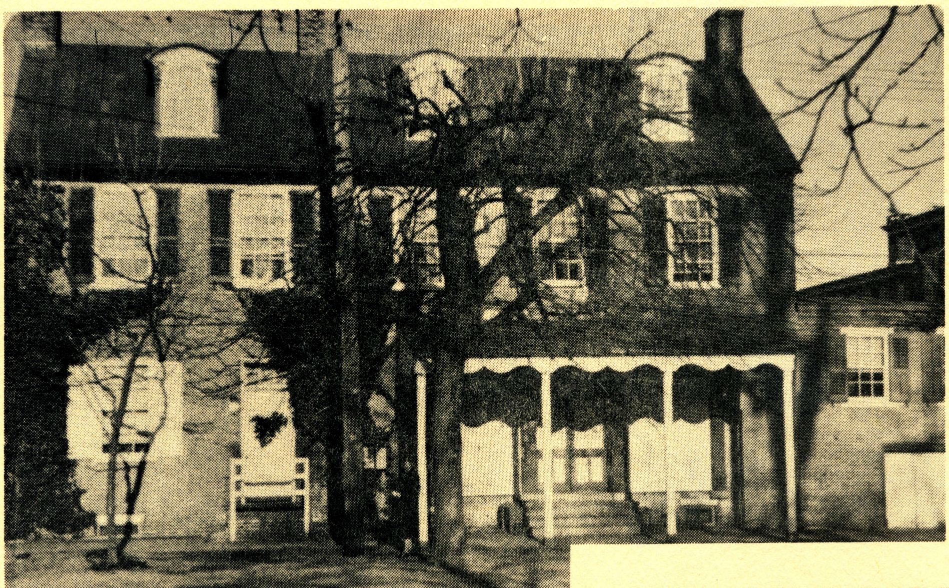
This faded c1910 photo shows Jacob Muehlberger's Bread, Cake & Pie Bakery on Route 13. This same building owned by Frank Duggan later housed Wilson's Grocery Store before that business moved into Odessa Hall. Today, this is the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Shevock.[20]



This c1934 photo shows the interior of the Wilson Store when it occupied the front rooms of the James Shallcross house on Main Street. This house, badly damaged in the Odessa Hall fire, had been purchased at auction by the Shallcross's for $1,000. Today, this is the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Jamison.[21]

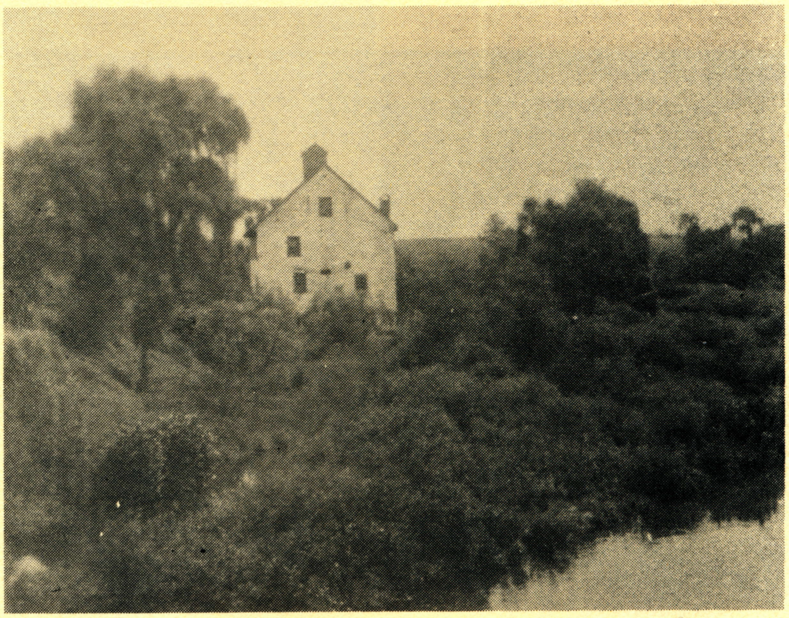


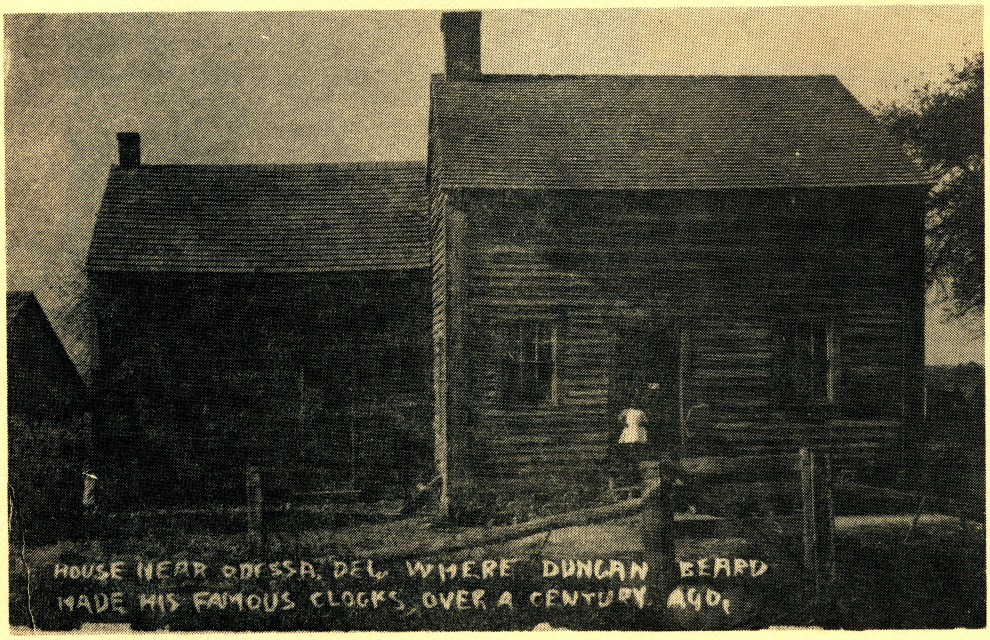
A 1922 view of the William Regener Dry Goods & Grocery Store on Main Street next to the Brick Hotel. Before the building was razed, it was owned in turn by the Sachs and by the Armstrongs. Today, this site is occupied by the residence known as "Leftovers."[22]



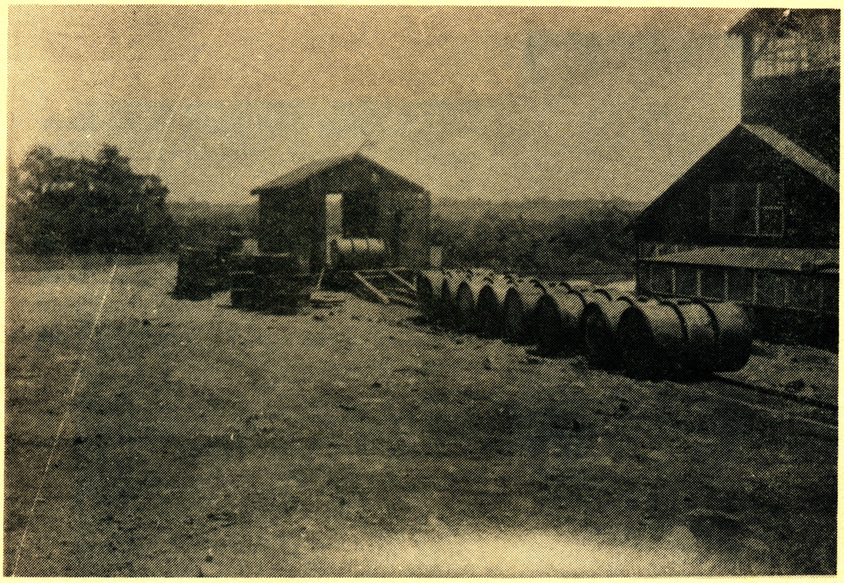
This is a post 1961 photo of the Davis store & residence, constructed in 1825 by Outten Davis. This building has housed numerous Odessa businesses, including the business of Crouch & Davis, the Davis Brothers, and most recently Harrison Davis, who operated a grocery store here from 1934 until the business closed in 1961.[23]

Mills were important to the Odessa area, as the surrounding farms produced so much grain. This is Voshel's Mill on Brick Mill Road before its demolition. Noxontown Pond and Silver Lake were other important mill sites.[24]

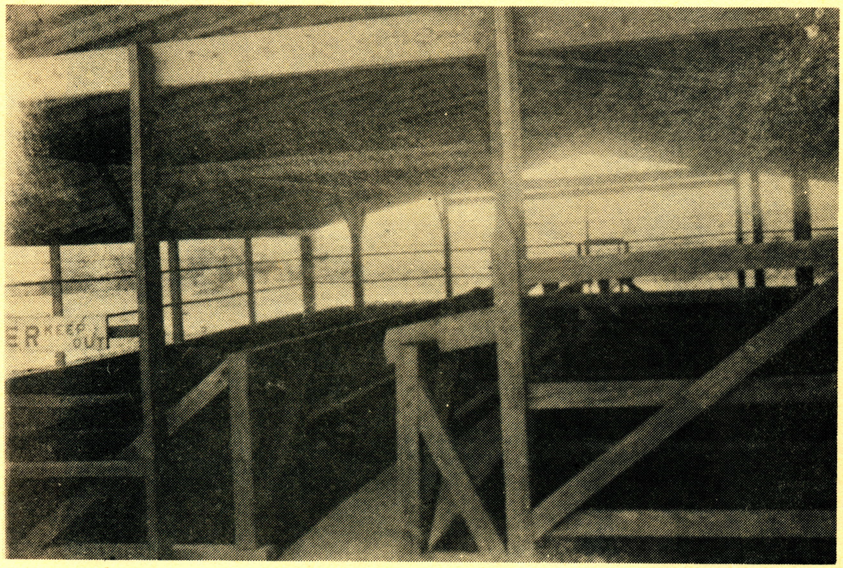



HOUSE NEAR ODESSA, DEL. WHERE DUNCAN BEARD
MADE HIS FAMOUS CLOCKS OVER A CENTURY AGO.

The old wooden house reputed to be the residence of the Scottish clock-maker, Duncan Beard. Beard worked within a mile of town on the way to the present Route 9. Individuals in the town and nearby could provide themselves at the end of the 18th century with the latest in tall clocks from this fine local craftsman.[25]

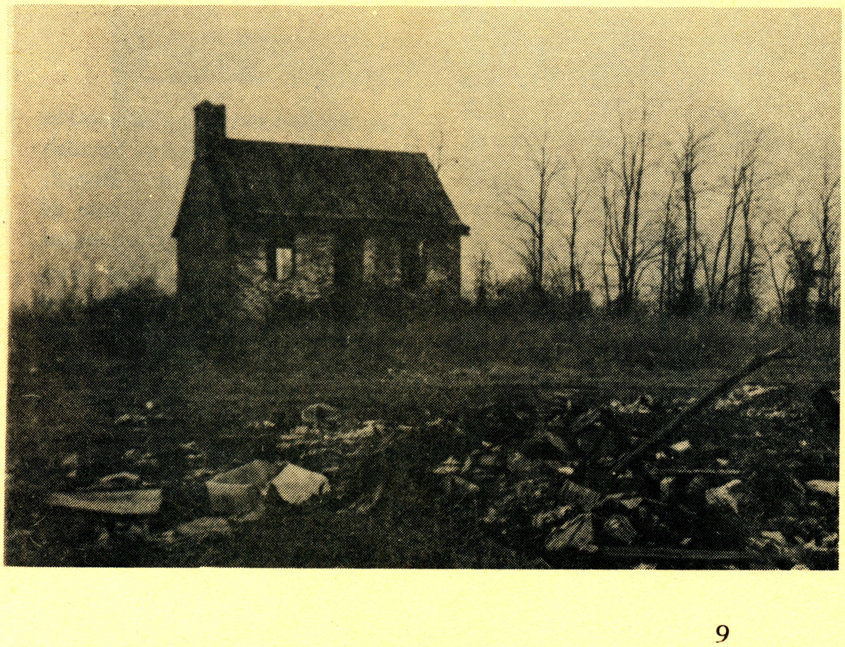


In the 1920's a subsidiary of the Du Pont Company built a plant on the present J.C. Calloway property which borders the creek. The aim was to test green marl.[26]

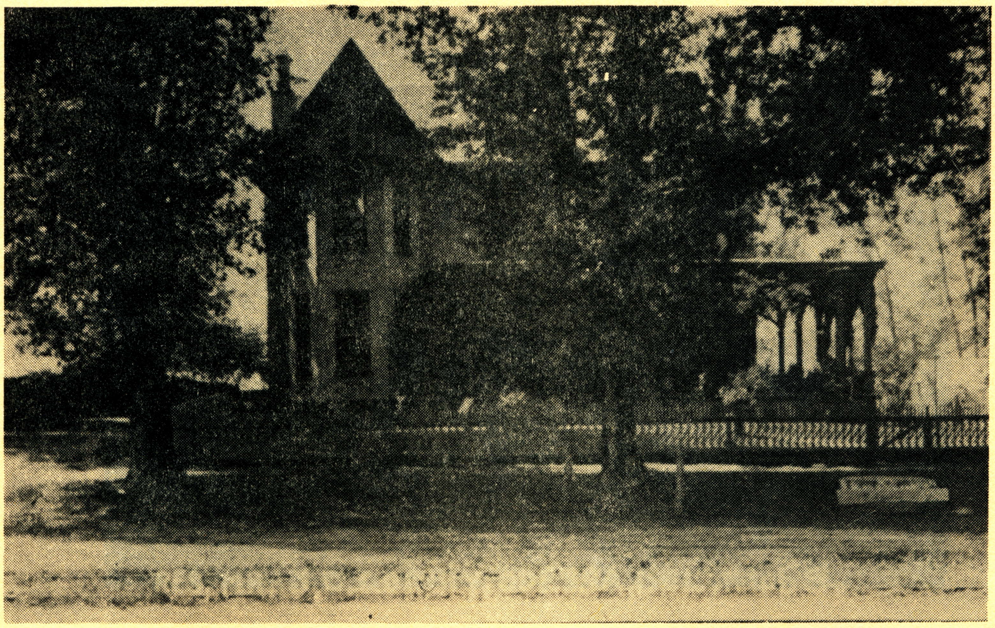


An interior view of the plant which attempted to break down green marl into its elements and find valuable or at least usable chemicals.[27]

HOMES

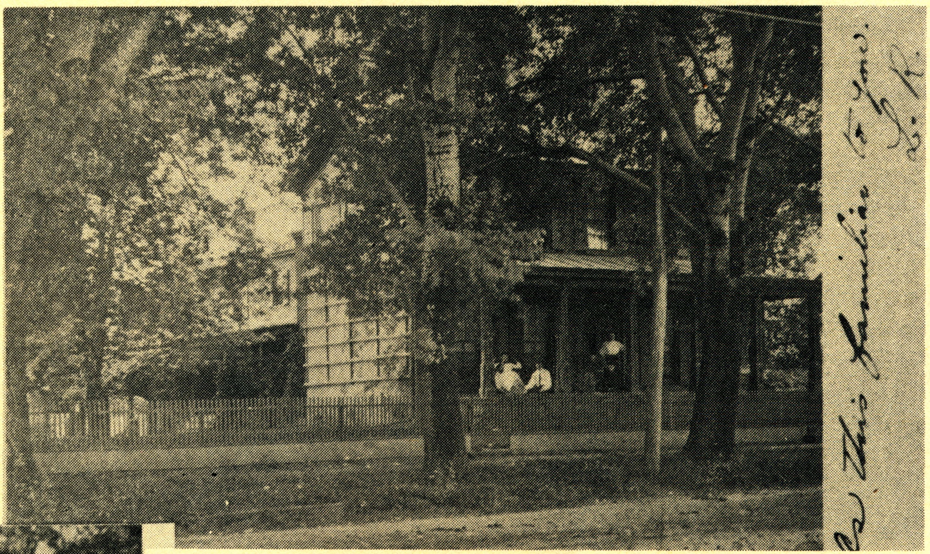


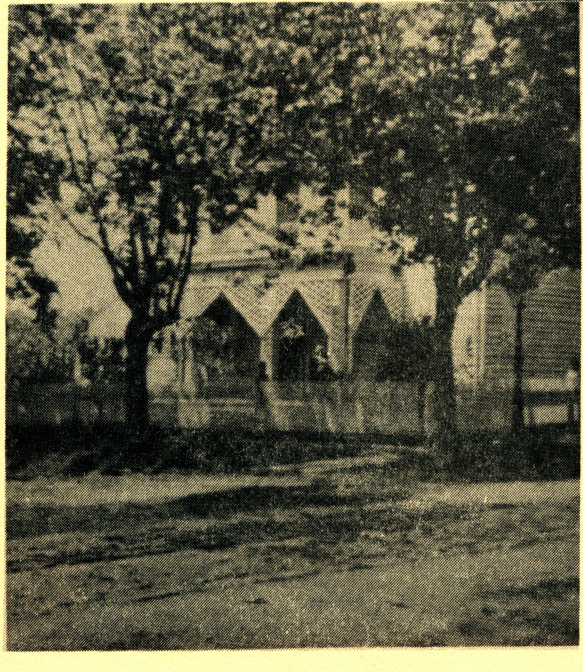
A 1938 view of the house purchased that year by Mr. & Mrs. J. Clifford Calloway. Although the construction date is unknown, bricks and mortar date from the earliest period, and story has it that the house was once the Manse for the original Old Drawyers, which was destroyed by fire.[28]



Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Walter L. Kabis. The right hand section of this brick mansion was orignially in the Federal style when Samuel Thomas and his family lived there. It was remodeled at the height of the Victorian era when John C. Corbit, grandson of William Corbit, gained possession (about 1870).[29]

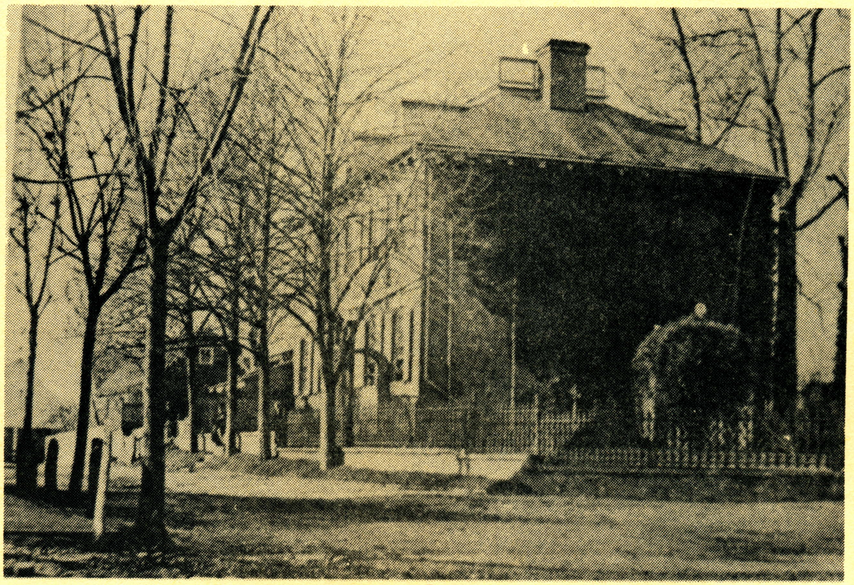
A c1898 view of the Briscoe house on Main St. This residence, which stands today between northbound and southbound Routes 13, has a boat paneled kitchen with the sign CLIO posted on one wall. Today, this is the home of Mr. & Mrs. Harry McNatt.[30]

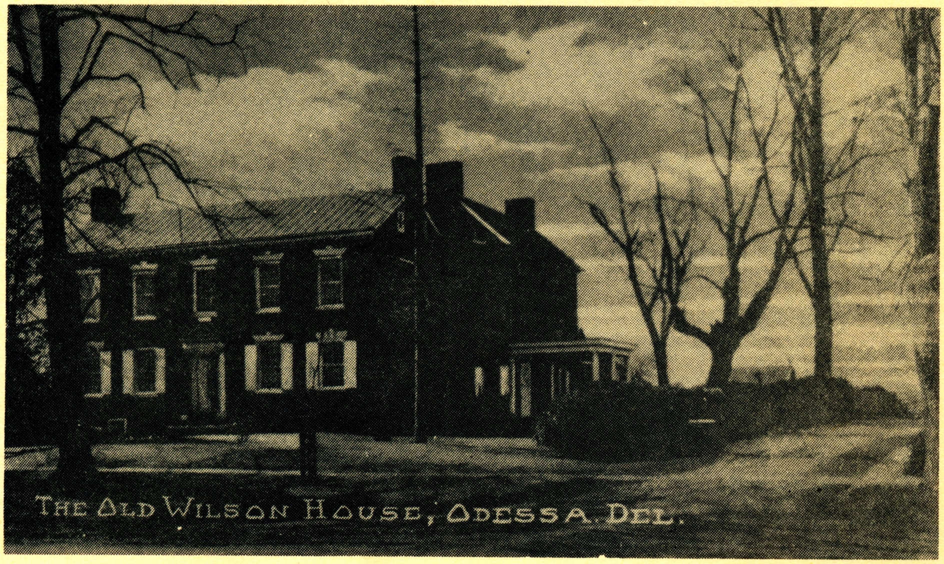




A turn-of-the century view of the residence at 3rd & High Streets, built about 1845 by Charles S. Tatman, Odessa merchant and banker. This view clearly shows the Victorian latticework, which for a time obscured the house's Federal lines. The house is now the residence of Mr. & Mrs. David Pearl.[31]

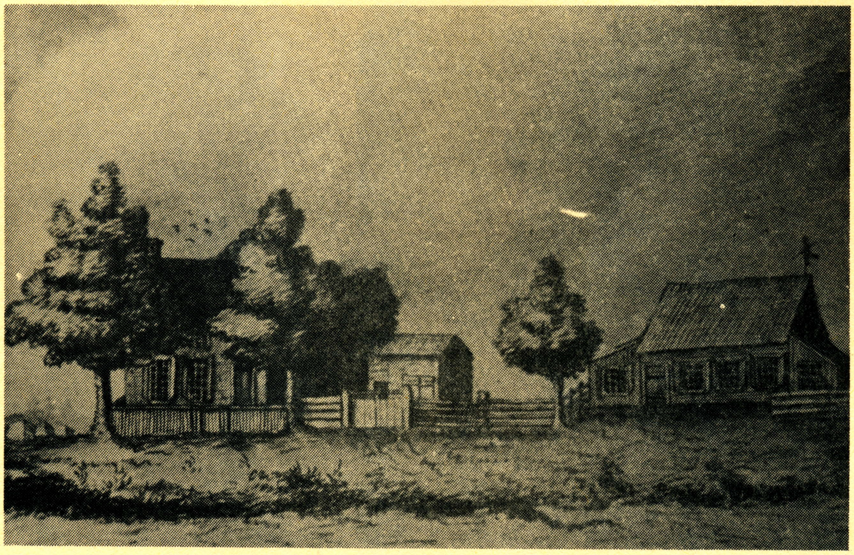
The present Corbit-Sharp House shown about 1877 with members of the Corbit family assembled on the terrace and looking out the window. The Wilson-Polk brick store had been torn down in 1875 and the fence-enclosed area at the right had become the Corbits' front yard.[32]





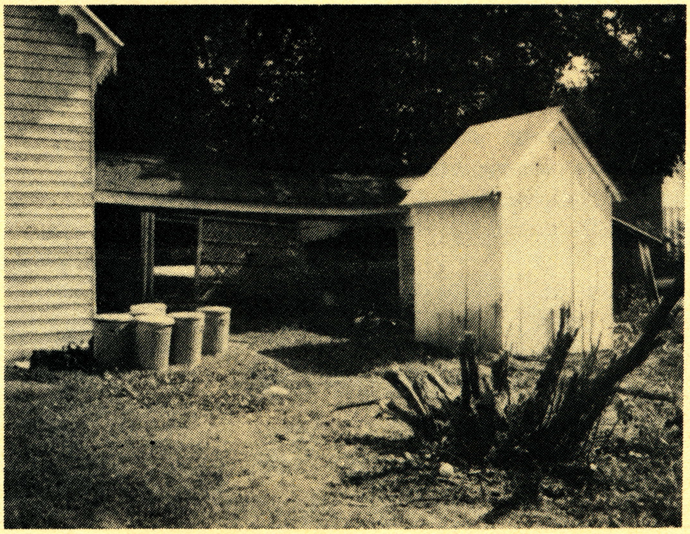
The Wilson House is now a museum operated by Winterthur. It was built in 1769 by David Wilson who ran a successful general store on the adjoining lot. Mrs. E. Tatnall Warner, Wilson's great-granddaughter, was the original founder of the museum in the early 20th century.[33]

Drawing of the Janvier property by George W. Janvier, 1798. The old workshop is seen at right. The stable, background center, was given to Winterthur recently by St. Paul's Church and was moved to its present location behind the Brick Hotel.[34]



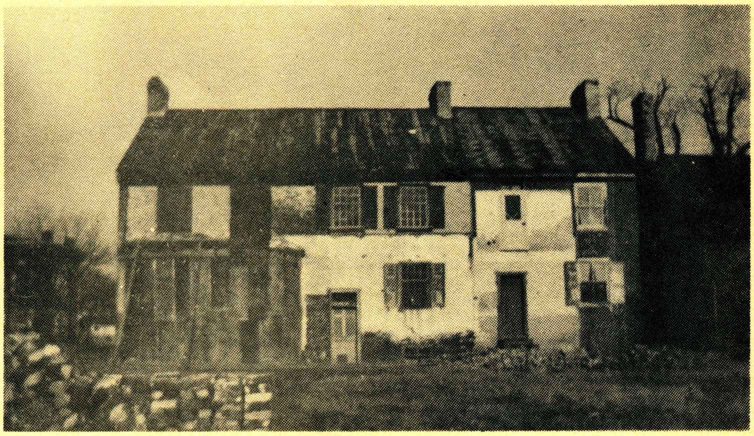
Brick residence built by John Janvier, the cabinet-maker in 1775. Here shown in Victorian times, the house is now the Methodist Parsonage. At the right stood the workshop where John Janvier, Jr. carried on the business until 1850.[35]

An unconventional view of the Mailly House, showing a remarkable lattice-work summer kitchen. The rear of the house is late 18th century. The front section was added by Mr. & Mrs. Mailly Davis in 1938. Today, this is the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Starnes.[36]

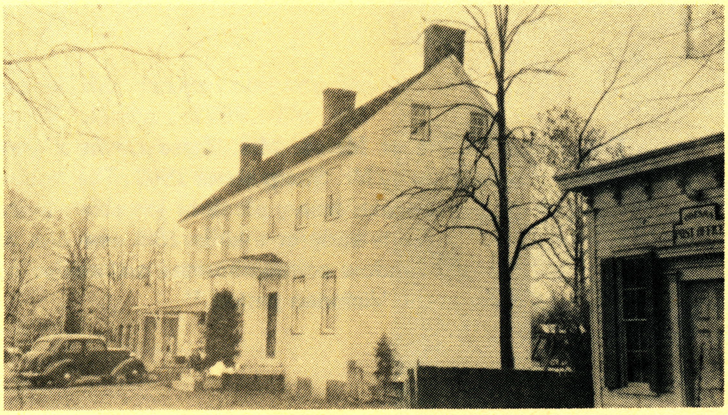


The present home of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse Loven before its restoration by Mr. Sharp about 1941. The wood sheathing conceals heavy plank or log construction. The house is early or middle 18th century, but the bay window commemorates a store operated there in the Victorian period.[37]

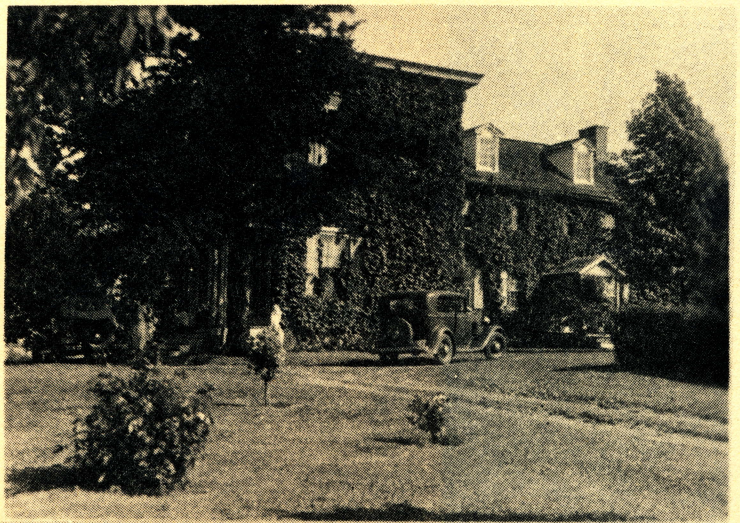
Main Street ascending from the bridge in 1938. Shortly afterward, Mr. Sharp purchased these properties and removed them. The house at the left was relocated on High Street and is now the home of the Arthur Whittington family.[38]



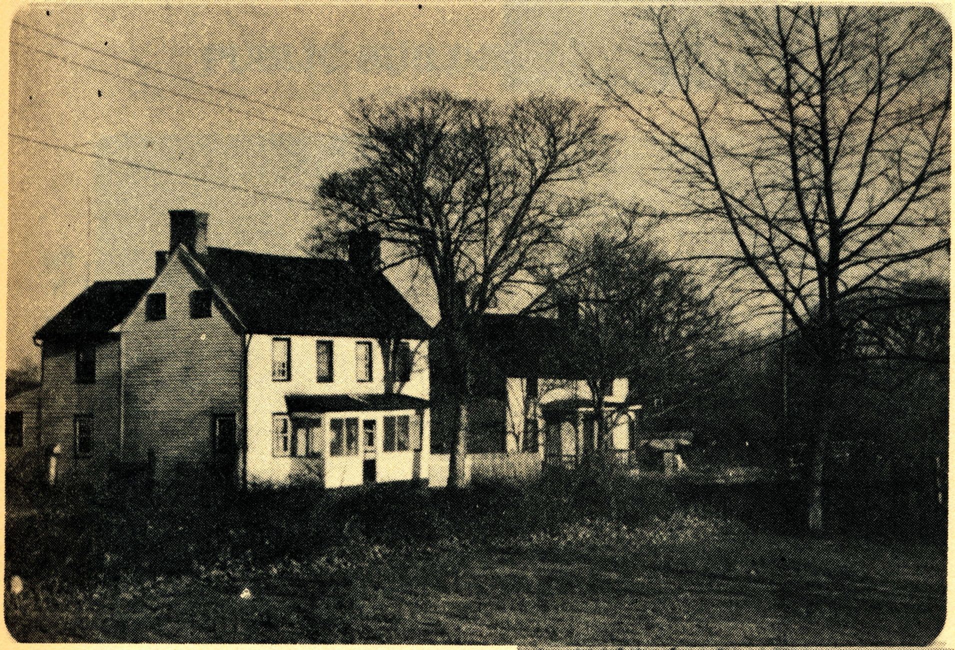
Row of late 18th century brick houses on Main Street seen from the back about 1940. Mr. Sharp restored two of them and they are now the homes of Mrs. Stanley Townsend and Mrs. C.W. Hazel, respectively. The one on the right (between the chimneys) was torn down to provide more yard for the present Jesse Loven residence.[39]



The James Shallcross House on Main Street as it appeared in 1937. The house was constructed in three sections: the first, a two-story log cabin, in 1775; the second and middle section in about 1790; and the third section next to the Old Post Office in the 1820's. The residence is known today as the Starr-Lore House after the original owners.[40]

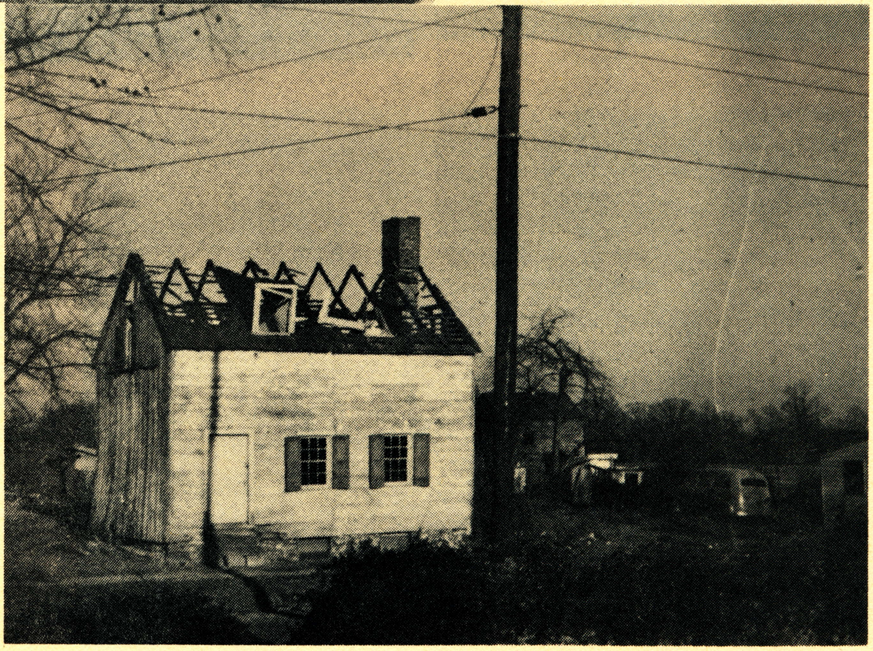


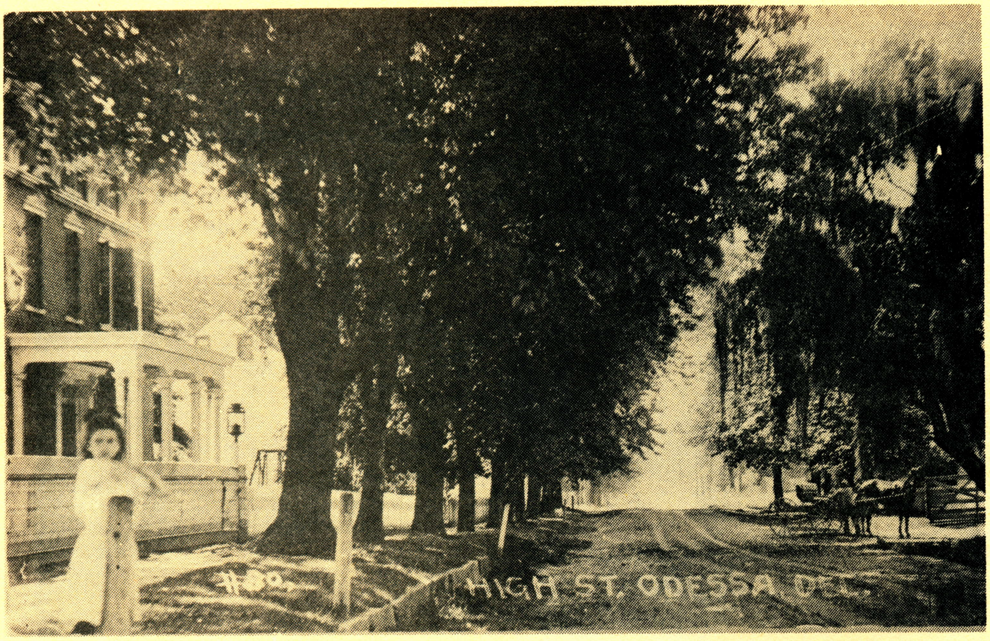
The "January House", now owned by Mr. & Mrs. W.J. Buckworth, before it was remodeled by Rodney Sharp. The large section to the left (no longer standing) was added to the late 18th century dwelling during the "peach prosperity" of the 1850's.[41]



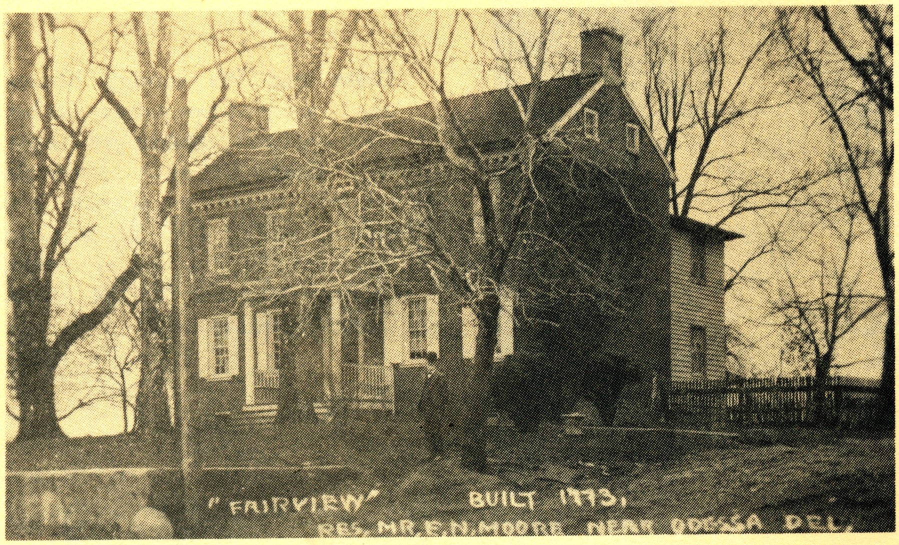
These mid-19th century houses, which occupied two narrow lots between the Croft property and the present Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library, were purchased and demolished by Mr. Sharp about 1963. At that time he was working on the restoration of the nearby Collins- Sharp House.[42]

A view of the Croft House on High Street after the fire. A section of the house was standing in the 1960's. The Charles Dunham house now occupies this spot.[43]

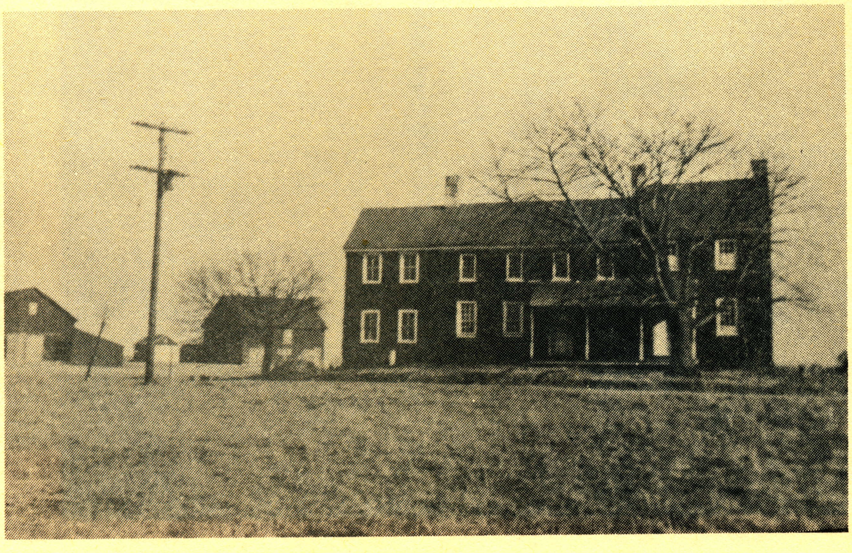




Looking east along High Street, about 1908. Odessa had tree-lined streets, a 19th century fashion set by old towns in New England. Notice the street lamp near the Cyrus Polk house, now the home of Mayor Marion Miller.[44]

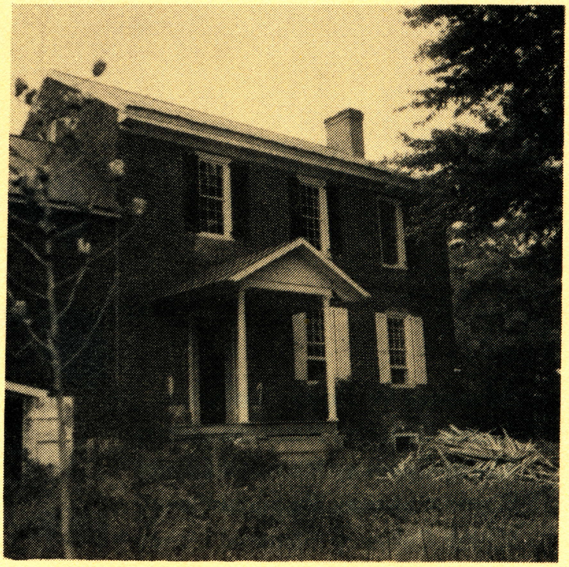


A c1908 view of "Fairview", the 1773 residence of Major E.N. Moore. Moore was an officer in Washington's army and the founder of The Society of the Cincinnati in 1783. "Fairview" is today the home of Mrs. George F. Kelly.[45]

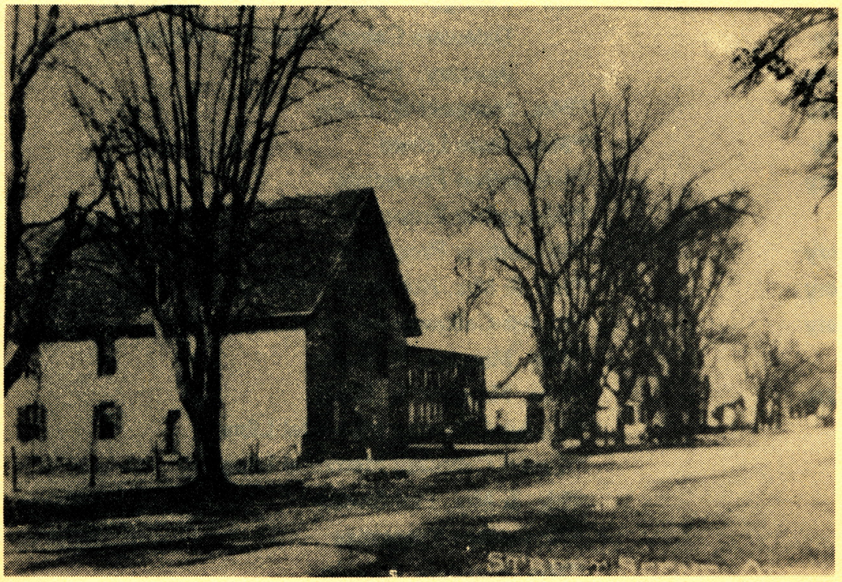


A c1946 view of the "Old Corbit Farm", purchased by Mr. and Mrs. John Hoch that year. A kitchen room on the left end of the house was removed during restoration. The farm, situated on Route 9 north of Odessa, was purchased by Mr. & Mrs. Phil Sheats in 1972.[46]

This old brick house stood near Odessa until 1969, when it was removed to Cecil County, Maryland and became incorporated into the residence of J. Michael Plum. It was an 18th century residence of the Cantwell and Jones families. Cantwell's Bridge was named after Richard Cantwell.[47]

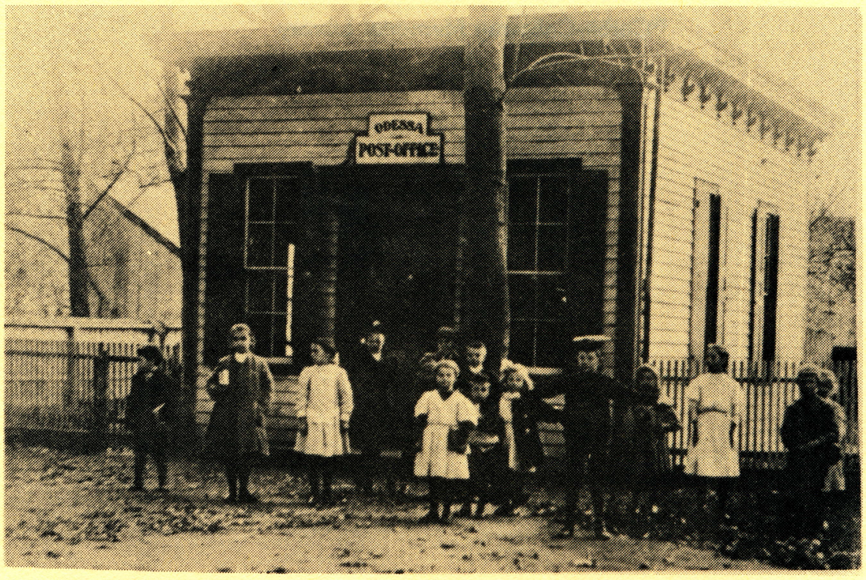


PUBLIC BUILDINGS



This c1906 view of Main Street shows Odessa Hall, a large two-story frame town hall constructed in 1877. A large meeting hall on the second floor offered shows by traveling players. Seats regularly sold for twenty-five cents for adults and fifteen cents for children until the hall was destroyed by fire in 1926.[48]

A c1906 view of the former Odessa Post Office. In the early 1960's this building was purchased by Mrs. Richard Du Pont, the owner of the race horse Kelso, and was moved to Woodstock Farm near Chesapeake City, Maryland where it is used as an office. Today's post office, dedicated in 1965, was constructed on the same site. The date of the earliest post office is not known, but one early post office occupied part of the Davis store.[49]



PICTURE SOURCES

[1]Mrs. Alex W. Boyer, Melbourne, Fla.
[2]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[3]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[4]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[5]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[6]Mrs. Gladys Ennis
[7]Mrs. Gladys Ennis
[8]Mrs. Gladys Ennis
[9]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[10]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[11]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[12]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Lbrary
[13]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[14]Winterthur Properties
[15]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[16]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[17]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[18]Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeler
[19]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[20]Mrs. Gladys Ennis
[21]Mrs. Jesse Loven
[22]Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeler
[23]Mrs. Margaret B. Davis
[24]Winterthur Properties
[25]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[26]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[27]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[28]Mrs. J. Clifford Calloway
[29]Mr. Walter L. Kabis
[30]Mrs. Harry McNatt
[31]Mr. & Mrs. David Pearl
[32]Winterthur Properties
[33]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[34]de Valinger, Leon, "John Janvier, Delaware Cabinet-Maker." **Antiques,** January, 1942.
[35]Mrs. Margaret B. Davis
[36]Mrs. Jesse Loven
[37]Winterthur Properties
[38]Winterthur Properties
[39]Winterthur Properties
[40]Mr. & Mrs. Robert B. Jamison
[41]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[42]Mrs. Margaret B. Davis
[43]Mrs. Margaret B. Davis
[44]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[45]Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library
[46]Mr. & Mrs. Phil Sheats
[47]Winterthur Properties
[48]Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeler
[49]Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeler